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Publication date:
2015

Document Version
Accepted author manuscript, peer reviewed version

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Svenson, M. N., Thirion, L. M., Youngman, R. E., Mauro, J. C., Rzoska, S. J., Bockowski, M., & Smedskjær, M. (2015). *Pressure-Induced Changes in Inter-Diffusivity, Compressive Stress, and Hardness in Chemically Strengthened Glass*. Poster presented at ACerS GOMD-DGG Joint Annual Meeting, Miami, United States.
http://ceramics.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/GOMD15_WebFinal_complete.pdf

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Pressure-Induced Changes in Inter-Diffusivity, Compressive Stress, and Hardness in Chemically Strengthened Glass

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The short- and intermediate-range structures of a glass are tunable through high-pressure treatment and may thus give rise to properties unattainable under ambient pressure. Moreover, chemical strengthening of glass through K^+ -for- Na^+ ion exchange can be used to improve the damage resistance of glasses by introducing a compressive stress in the glass surface. However, the interplay among isostatic compression, pressure-induced changes in alkali diffusivity, compressive stress generated through ion exchange, and the resulting mechanical properties are poorly understood. In this work, we employ a specially designed gas pressure chamber to compress bulk glass samples isostatically up to 1 GPa at elevated temperature before or after the ion exchange treatment of an industrial sodium-magnesium aluminosilicate glass. Compression after the ion exchange treatment changes the shape of the potassium-sodium diffusion profiles and significantly increases glass hardness. Compression of the samples prior to ion exchange leads to a decreased Na^+ - K^+ inter-diffusivity and increased compressive stress, and reveals a strong dependence of glass hardness on the compression temperature. We discuss these results in terms of the underlying structural changes in network-modifier environments and overall network densification.